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AUTHOR McLendon, Sandra F.
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ABSTRACT

In 1992, a practicum was undertaken to develop a student retention plan for use at Sue Bennett College (SBC), an independent junior college located in London, Kentucky. The college had a retention rate of 33 percent between the freshman and sophomore year in 1990 which was a decline from the 62 percent in 1985. The development of the plan included a review of the literature, the solicitation of retention plans from other institutions of higher education, input from the Student Life Committee, and input from various deans, administrators, and outside experts on retention. The plan emphasized the following: (1) the development of an enrollment management plan that would help foster an environment for persistence; (2) campus-wide participation, academic integration, faculty involvement, academic tutoring, academic advising, financial aid expediency, and freshman orientation; (3) the reduction of bureaucracy in admissions and registration, increasing hours in offices, increasing commuter parking, and offering more support services; (4) creative scheduling of courses and social activities; (5) faculty mentoring, academic support, early alert systems, and child care; (6) a caring attitude on the part of the faculty and the staff; (7) a recruitment effort that emphasized retention; (8) an ongoing institutional research effort; (9) a communications effort that included faculty, staff, and students; (10) an institutional support system designed to increase student competencies; (11) an evaluative system designed to assess the effectiveness of the plan; and (12) a campus-wide delegation of retention responsibilities. A discussion of the plan's implications and further recommendations are offered. Appendixes include the SBC retention plan and an SBC financial aid plan. (JMC)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RETENTION PLAN
FOR USE AT SUE BENNETT COLLEGE

Societal Factors Affecting Education

by

Sandra F. McLendon

Sue Bennett College

John Morgan, Ed.D.

Greenwood Cluster

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A Practicum Report presented to Nova University in
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degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

July, 1992

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The purpose of this practicum was to develop a student retention plan for use at Sue Bennett College. The college had a retention rate of 33 percent between the freshman and the sophomore year in 1990 which was a decline from the 62 percent in 1985.

Sue Bennett College is a two year private college related to The Methodist Church. The college is one of twenty-one independent colleges in Kentucky. There are only three private junior colleges still operating in Kentucky, and one of the these colleges is in the process of becoming a four year institution.

The question for this study was: What are the elements that should be included in a retention plan for Sue Bennett College? The procedure for determining the retention plan elements included: a search of the literature to determine the retention plan content and development process; an analysis of other retention plans from comparable colleges;

a solicitation for input from the Student Life Committee and the college faculty and staff; and a review of the plan by experts in the area of retention.

The resulting plan included a philosophy statement and goals, actions, timelines, and assigned responsibilities. The priority goals included strategies for implementation and assessments.

It was concluded that to be effective, the plan had to have campus-wide participation and the support of the faculty and the staff. The life cycle of the plan began with the first inquiry and ended with graduation. The plan had to be supported by a systematic and comprehensive database of information. The plan had to be supported monetarily in the budget for at least five years and had to be assessed annually for effectiveness.

Recommendations derived from the study included: (1) The retention plan should be adopted by the Board of Trustees. (2) The faculty and staff should receive a copy of the college's retention plan. (3) The retention plan should be implemented in priority stages by the faculty and the staff. (4) The Board of Trustees should budget funds to help ensure successful implementation for the plan. (5) The retention plan should be evaluated and revised on an annual basis.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

Sue Bennett College located in London, Kentucky, is one of twenty-one independent colleges in Kentucky. Only three of the twenty-one independent colleges in Kentucky are junior colleges. Since 1932, Sue Bennett College has been a junior college accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Although the college has grown significantly in the past twenty years, increasing from 247 students in 1968 to 522 students in 1991, the retention rate between the freshman and sophomore year is poor. In 1985, the retention rate was 62 percent, and the retention rate in 1990 was 33 percent (MINDS REPORT, 1991). For independent colleges in Kentucky, the average retention rate between the freshman and sophomore year in 1990 was 48 percent (Council of Independent Colleges, 1991). In a society where the potential market of eighteen year old students is decreasing (Levine, 1989), the college's poor retention rate becomes

particularly significant for Sue Bennett College since the college's pool of applicants is decreasing, and the college is already experiencing poor retention. The external factor which could affect the college is the reduced pool of eighteen year olds from which to recruit. The internal factor which is affecting the college is the poor and declining retention rate between the freshman and the sophomore year.

Purpose of the Investigation

The purpose of the investigation was to develop a retention plan to help reduce the large number of rising sophomores who transferred to other institutions or who dropped out of the college. This retention plan focused on the retention of the commuting students since the statistics at Sue Bennett College indicated that the residential students remained for the sophomore year. The retention rate for residential students in 1991 was 87 percent (Factbook, 1991). However, the overall rate at Sue Bennett College in 1990 and in 1991 was less than half the residential retention rate at 33 percent (Factbook, 1991). If more rising sophomores, especially commuting students, were retained, the total enrollment could be increased. Recruiting new students in a diminishing eighteen year old market is also a problem that is not going to disappear for the next few years into the year 2000 (Levine, 1989). For

the college to remain prosperous, the college admissions staff had to aggressively recruit nontraditional students as well as traditional students. Concurrently, the college staff had to try innovative ways to retain the students who do not adjust well to college life during the freshman year and withdrew during the first six weeks of school and those who felt compelled to transfer to other institutions after completing the freshman year.

Significance to the Institution

It was anticipated that a new retention plan would increase the number of students who remained enrolled at Sue Bennett College for the sophomore year. It was also anticipated that the new retention plan would increase the number of freshmen who remained enrolled beyond the first six weeks of school. This increased retention would increase the total enrollment at the institution and contribute to the viability of Sue Bennett College.

Relationship to the Seminar

This practicum is directly related to the Societal Factors Affecting Education seminar which dealt specifically with the study of trends and influences which affect higher education. These trends and influences are increasingly having an impact both directly and indirectly on planning

and decision-making in higher education. Decision-makers in higher education and at Sue Bennett College would be remiss not to heed these factors.

Research Question

The research question for this practicum was: What are the elements that should be included in a retention plan for Sue Bennett College?

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A literature search was conducted to provide the basis for the study. Definitions of retention, strategies for retention, and elements of retention plans were the major identifiers used to locate the relevant material. The literature review included opinions of experts on retention as well as the findings of other institutions where retention problems had been addressed. Two year institutions were examined carefully for information on the topic of retention.

Traditional Student Redefined

One of the most remarkable societal factors affecting higher education today has been the increase in the number of older students on campus. Forty percent of all college students are twenty-five years old or older (Levine, 1989). From 1970 until 1985, the college participation rate for 25 year old students and older increased by 114 percent while

the participation rate for 18 to 24 year old students only increased by 15 percent (Villella and Michael, 1991). The typical college student, who was an individual about twenty years old, attending college full time, living on campus, and preparing for a professional career, no longer exists (Parnell, 1990). In an article by Bianchi (1991), Ernest Boyer predicts that the definition of a college student will continue to change. The new enrollment patterns will include older students who either work part time or full time. Women will compose a large percentage of this population (Johnston and Packer, 1987).

Retention Redefined

According to Tinto (1987:1), approximately 1.2 million of the 2.8 million students who enter college in 1986 will ever complete a degree. Tinto (1987) defines dropouts as those students who fail to receive a college degree within a certain period of time. However, Beal and Noel (1980) insist that every student departure should not be automatically labeled as a dropout. Also, not every student departure should receive attention or action from the institution. The reason for the student's departure should be determined, and then a determination can be made as to whether or not action is required. Some students have been labeled as drop outs although they will return to higher education at a later time. Some students transfer, and

others attain their goals before graduation. Persisters are those students who achieve their degrees.

Reasons for Nonpersistence

Attrition rates vary from institution to institution. Most four year institutions have a completion rate of approximately 44 percent while two year institutions have a completion rate of 29 percent (Tinto, 1987). Two year institutions have greater problems with retention because the two year college students are different in many respects from four year college students (Wright, 1985). The two year college usually has an open admissions policy which attracts many students who are considered nontraditional. The nontraditional students have been in the workforce for a number of years and are usually attempting to achieve a specific goal in relation to their work skills. These students would fit the definition for attainers and are non-degree students. Usually, these students leave the institution because of family and work demands (Villella and Michael, 1991). Many students at two year institutions attend college to achieve a set work related goal that does not include graduation.

Tinto (1987) states that the major causes for student withdrawal include academic difficulty, adjustment, goals, uncertainty, commitment, integration and community membership, incongruence and isolation. Noel, Levitz, and

Saluri (1986) feel that other factors that correlate with retention are financial support, orientation activities, counseling services, and support services. However, they feel that the most important reason for students withdrawing from college is dissatisfaction with the faculty. Murdock's (1990) integrative review of retention literature indicates that lack of financial aid is also a reason for nonpersistence among low-income students.

The reason for withdrawal is vital in determining the reasons for departure. Tinto (1987) characterizes student departures as voluntary withdrawals and academic dismissals. He further asserts that only 10 to 15 percent of all departures from colleges are due to academic failure (Tinto, 1987). Involuntary departures most often take the form of dismissal for academic inadequacies because the individual has not maintained the acceptable standards for continued enrollment in the institution. Social dismissals for infractions of college rules and regulations are infrequent occurrences. Voluntary withdrawals account for nearly 85 percent of the institution's student departures and are usually related to the students' intentions and commitments and how they relate to their academic and social involvement at the institution (Tinto, 1987). Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) determine that dropping out of college is a complicated decision that usually involves several reasons so no one reason can be determined for a student's withdrawal from college.

Strategies for Retention

The new trend towards the enrollment of the older student population and more women and minorities creates its own set of problems with retention. Retention studies indicate that residential students have a typically important index for student involvement because the students have more opportunities to become involved and to have contact with faculty members (Astin, 1977). Two year community colleges have a low persistence rate with only 28 percent transferring to four year institutions (AACJC, 1991). The two year community college typically offers limited opportunities for involvement and decreased chances for completing the degree program (Astin, 1975).

Hossler and Bean (1990) believe that retention plans should begin with the first inquiry and continue until the completion of graduation. A comprehensive model for enrollment management should originate at the point of contact to the point of graduation. This program should encompass marketing, recruitment, and admissions as well as financial aid and pricing. Other important factors in the program include academic advising, institutional research, orientation, and student services (Hossler, 1985). Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) assert that the institution should adopt a philosophy that causes students to persist while encouraging them to graduate. After acceptance into the institution, Tinto (1975) believes that academic and

societal integration is the key to persistence of college students both traditional and nontraditional. Astin (1977) advocates the involvement model to raise persistence rates. No matter how the models are labeled, the assumption by both Astin and Tinto is that persistence or retention is related to how well the student fits the college environment.

Hossler and Bean (1990) indicate that a college administration and faculty have to create a staying environment to encourage persistence. Bean and Metzner (1987) argue that the new definition of traditional and nontraditional student and the increased numbers of nontraditional students should be reflected in an increased emphasis on the academic and external environment for retention and a decreased emphasis on the social environment. Beal and Noel (1980) indicate that the most important factor in student retention is the caring and concerned attitude of the faculty and the staff. Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) say that the recruitment literature is the first overture to the potential student, and the literature should represent an attitude of warmth and ease in the admission process. Pascarella (1986) affirms that quality of instruction, advising, registration, financial aid, student activities and support services are all important factors in a student's decision to remain at an institution after matriculating. Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) indicate that the institution should develop an institutional financial aid packaging policy that is need

based. The financial aid awards should be made early, and the awards should have a proper balance to reduce the student's loan burden and to reduce the student's work study load.

Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) further indicate that some strategies of student retention, especially nontraditional students, should include creative scheduling of academics and social activities, creation of job opportunities, mentoring programs, academic support programs with early alert warning systems, housing, and child care opportunities. Villella and Michael (1991) advocate the reduction of bureaucratic procedures involved in admissions, registration, and orientation activities. They further promote flexible scheduling of courses, longer office hours, adequate commuter parking, and accessible academic advising. However, they feel the greatest satisfaction index would be realized from satisfaction from significant courses with interactive formats. The courses also should be relevant to future employment.

Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) suggest that the students should be introduced to the college environment through an orientation program that could be presented during the summer in a one to three day format, during the fall in a one week format, or during the semester in a credit course format. During the student orientation, the students would receive an outline of student services and an introduction to the campus. The students should begin to

feel a greater commitment to the campus. All orientation programs should include a faculty and/or peer mentoring system to encourage student to develop memberships in the college environment both socially and intellectually. The most critical time to establish these relationship between students and their advisors and therefore contribute to the students' success is during the first six weeks of the freshman year (Noel, Levitz, and Saluri, 1986).

Beal and Noel (1980) assert that the most important positive student retention factor is a caring faculty and staff. Over 66 percent of the students who drop out list dissatisfaction with the faculty as the reason for leaving (Noel, Levitz, and Saluri, 1986). The performance of the faculty seems to reflect the attitude of the institution. Activities that promote interaction with the college community should be promoted since students value faculty friendships. The faculty can interact with the students as academicians, as role model, as mentors, and as advisors. Since the faculty has the most frequent contact with the students, the faculty is essential to the early alert system. Astin (1985) postulates that academic advising is one of the weakest of the entire programs of student services. Koerin (1991) advocates strategies to improve academic advising that would link advising to institutional priorities, would evaluate the existing evaluation system, and would provide sustained campus-wide support for activities to improve academic advising.

The academic development of the student also has a direct correlation to retention (Beal and Noel, 1980). In order to determine the level of the students, especially in institutions with open admissions, colleges are providing testing services to determine the students' skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Colleges are increasingly requiring that students be placed in courses where they will have a greater chance to succeed. Successful retention programs include assessment and placement, developmental courses, and ancillary support services (Opp, 1986).

Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) also suggest that the strategy to retain commuters should include an awareness of the commuter student, promotion of the student into the campus life, creation of a child care program, creation of a special commuter club, and formulation of a mentor program.

Pascarella (1986) states that an ongoing longitudinal program for research and tracking is essential for a retention program to be successful. Pollock (1989) states that a student retention database should include a specific group; analyze credit hours and grade point averages; provide information on majors and changes; provide reasons for withdrawal of students; chart student departures and re-enrollments; indicate differences between annual cohorts; include lists, counts, and statistical analyses; and monitor the students' involvements in activities and athletics.

Tinto's (1987) longitudinal model of retention begins with the background characteristics of the students and proceeds with information on student interaction within the college organizationally, environmentally, academically, and socially. According to Krotseng (1989), the retention study should monitor the complete student life cycle from first inquiry through graduation.

Elements of Retention Plans

Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) formulate a blueprint for retention actions. The steps in the blueprint are: (1) Decide to act. (2) Create a need assessment and beneficial results. (3) Identify supporters for the program. (4) Appoint a start-up committee. (5) Formalize the efforts with a task force. (6) Display data to the committee. (7) Establish priorities for actions. (8) Implement agreed upon actions. Although retention programs are individualized and no one template exists for every school, Simmons (1986) discovered a commonalty that mandated a caring attitude on the part of the faculty and staff; that began with recruitment; that mandated a continuous program of institutional research; that included systematic communication among faculty, counselors, and students; that developed instructional support systems to raise student competencies; that assessed the effectiveness of the

program; and that assigned retention as a college-wide responsibility.

The Frapahoe Community College model for retention included plans for a data collection s included plans for a of the retention factors, a plan for actions for retention, and the involvement of the entire campus in retention from inquiry to graduation (Staying in the Picture, 1989). The Alabama Community College System retention plan included strategies and tactics for retention (Cantrell, 1985). The Alabama retention plan began with pre-enrollment contacts, proceeded with registration, financial aid, orientation, and academics. The plan involved the entire campus in the retention effort.

Conclusions

Retention literature does not indicate that there is one single reason for nonpersistence. Nor is there one single remedy for nonpersistence that can be prepackaged for every institution. Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) indicate that student success and satisfaction will result in student persistence. There are no magic tricks or gimmicks to achieving increased student satisfaction and retention. The literature does indicate that there are several combinations of strategies that an institutions can implement to improve retention. The development of the retention strategy for Sue Bennett College will naturally

include a combination of the strategies in the areas of recruitment and admissions, academics and student services, institutional research and evaluation, and informal and formal orientation.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Procedure

The research question for this development study was: What elements should be included in Sue Bennett College's retention plan? The procedure for determining the appropriate elements follow in chronological order.

A search of the literature pertaining to retention and the elements of an effective retention plan was the basis for developing the retention plan. A search was made of the ERIC documents, journals and periodicals, and texts related to retention and the necessary elements for a retention plan.

Input relative to the contents of a retention plan were solicited from the members of the Sue Bennett College Student Life Committee as well as from the Deans of Students at St. Catherine College, Lees College, and Sue Bennett College. The deans at these two outside colleges were asked for advice because they were deans at two year institutions that were comparable to Sue Bennett College.

Retention plans were solicited from other institutions of higher education in Kentucky--Somerset Community College in Somerset, Kentucky, and Lees College in Jackson, Kentucky. Somerset Community College did not submit a retention plan for review, and Lees' retention plan had been designed in 1977 and was dated. Models were also requested from two year Methodist college similar to Sue Bennett College but located in other states--Young Harris College in Young Harris, Georgia, and Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina. These models were not very comprehensive and dealt more with residential students. Two models were examined that were included in the literature. One of the models included in the literature was from Frapahoe Community College in Littleton, Colorado (Staying in the Picture, 1989). Another model from the literature was a comprehensive resource manual for retention for the Alabama Community system (Cantrell, 1985). These models were reviewed for elements to be included in the Sue Bennett College retention plan, and some of these elements such as the different categories and the tactical plans were included in the college's retention plan.

Copies of the retention plan were to be evaluated by the Deans of Students at St. Catherine's College and Lees College, two other private junior colleges in Kentucky. However, neither of the Deans from St. Catherine or Lees responded. So copies of the retention plan were sent to Vincent Tinto and Don Hossler, two experts in the field of

retention. Both experts responded that the plan would be accomplished better over a period of years with priorities assigned and costs examined.

Since the entire campus would be affected by the retention plan, the faculty and student members of the Student Life Committee examined the retention plan. Administrators from Sue Bennett College gave input relative to what they considered important elements of an effective retention plan through discussions and review of the document.

The retention plans was submitted to the President and subsequently to the Board of Trustees for review. The retention plans was submitted to Board of Trustees for approval during the Executive Council meeting that is scheduled for the summer of 1992.

Copies of the retention plan were distributed to all faculty and staff members at Sue Bennett College. A copy of the retention plan was included in the appendices section of the practicum report.

The review of the literature, the review of the models, the input from the Student Life Committee, and the input of the various deans, administrators, and outside experts on retention provided assistance in formulating a retention plan that will be unique to Sue Bennett College.

Assumptions

In the above study, an assumption was made that once the retention plan is developed, it would be utilized at Sue Bennett College, based on the prior approval of the system by the Sue Bennett Board of Trustees. A second assumption was that if the retention plan was approved by the Board of Trustees sufficient funds would be allocated in the budget to implement the retention plan. A third assumption was the literature search, models, and input from the experts would provide the needed reference resources to adequately develop a retention plan that would prove successful. A fourth assumption was that surveys and exit interviews would be conducted to determine the success of the retention plan.

Study Limitations

One of the limitations of the retention plan was that the use of the plan may be unique to Sue Bennett College. Sue Bennett College is a two year church-related college, and the plan may be inappropriate for a community college or a four year college. A second limitation is the availability of resources and personnel to implement some of the strategies in the retention plan. Adequate resources will have to be included in the budget proposal and subsequently approved by the Sue Bennett College Board of Trustees.

Definition of Terms

In this study, retention is used to define any systematic action taken to prevent individuals from leaving the college. The term "nonpersister" should not apply to transfer students who leave Sue Bennett College only after taking all the coursework available to them. Persistence and retention are used interchangeably in this study. Other defined terms are:

Attainer--students who temporarily interrupt enrollment in higher education with the intent of returning.

Nonpersister--students who discontinue enrollment from one regular semester to the next at the same institution.

Persister--students who continue enrollment at the same school from one semester to the next.

Stop outs--students who temporarily interrupt enrollment in higher education with the intent of returning at a later time.

Transfers--students who leave one institution of higher education to attend another institution.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

A search was conducted of the literature, and twenty-eight references were utilized. The search was conducted through the database at Nova University for ERIC documents and journal articles. The computerized holdings of Clemson University were searched for texts on retention. The search was conducted utilizing the identifiers "retention", "persistence", "student attrition", "withdrawal", and "two year colleges". The literature indicated that there was no one correct method for retention, but there were elements common to most retention plans (Simmons, 1986). Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) suggest that there is a blueprint to follow for formulating a retention plan. Furthermore, Hossler and Bean (1990) feel that retention efforts should begin with the first inquiry and should involve everyone.

Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) indicate in the blueprint for retention that the first step was the decision to act to create an atmosphere for beneficial retention results. Support for the retention plan had to be

engendered, and then a start-up committee had to be in place. The start-up committee had to formalize the process and then set priorities based on data for implementation. Therefore, Sue Bennett College used the existing Student Life Committee as the start-up committee to initiate the process for creating the retention plan and later reviewing the plan. However, the Academic Dean was assigned the main responsibility for developing the plan. Hossler and Bean (1990) advocate the involvement of the entire campus in the process of retention. According to Hossler and Bean (1990), the retention effort should begin with the first inquiry and end with the graduation effort. Simmons (1986) also found that a basic tenet of retention plans was that retention began with recruitment and that retention be a campus-wide project. As a result, Sue Bennett College's retention plan involved the entire campus from faculty to staff and commenced with plans for the actions that dealt with the student from inquiry to the anticipated graduation. Students were also targeted for the retention efforts because Beal and Noel (1980) determined that not every student departure should be considered a drop out situation.

Hossler and Bean (1990) suggest that a retention plan should include strategies for marketing, recruiting, financial aid packaging, advising, and counseling that would impact upon retention so Sue Bennett College's retention plan included a marketing strategy, a financial aid package and an advisor program. (The financial aid package is

included in the appendix.) Bean and Metzner (1987) also suggest that elements in a retention plan should reflect the academic environment and the external environment.

Therefore, Sue Bennett College's retention plan included elements that reflected the college's open admission policy and the commuter population. Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) indicate that most freshmen leave college during the first six weeks of college and suggest that a monitoring system, a mentoring system, a testing system, and a remediation program be considered in a retention plan. Most retention plans include a plan for instructional support systems (Simmons, 1986). Since Sue Bennett College has an open admission policy, the college's retention plan included a faculty mentoring and advising program, a testing and placement program, and a developmental and tutoring program to help students by creating a climate where they can succeed.

Murdock (1991) determined that the provision of financial aid for low income students has a significant impact on retention of low income students. Since Sue Bennett College's student population has 15 percent who have an average income of less than \$7000 and more than 70 percent receive financial aid, the retention plan included a new financial aid plan (CIRP, 1991).

Beal and Noel (1980), Tinto (1987), and Simmons (1986) indicate that one of the most important retention factors is the caring attitude of the faculty and the staff. Noel,

Levitz, and Saluri (1986) state that 66 percent of the students who left college seem to feel dissatisfaction with the faculty and the staff. Because student satisfaction with the faculty and the staff is so significant for retention, Sue Bennett College's retention plan included a goal to increase social interaction between the faculty and staff and the students. Faculty advising of the students and extensive training for the faculty in advising strategies were also an integral part of the retention plan at Sue Bennett College.

Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) believe that a staying atmosphere has to be created to foster the persistence of commuter students. Less bureaucracy should be promoted in procedures for admissions, registration, and orientation. Retention programs for commuter and nontraditional students should include creative scheduling for academic and social activities. Housing and child care support services should be provided. Flexible office hours, ample commuter parking, and sufficient advisor hours should be components of a retention plan for the nontraditional and commuter students to foster the staying atmosphere (Noel, Levitz, and Saluri, 1986). Therefore, Sue Bennett College's retention plan included goals for less bureaucratic procedures in admissions and registration, more flexible and convenient course schedules, and more support services such as tutoring and child care services.

Tinto (1987) feels that students had to interact within the institution organizationally, environmentally, academically, and socially. Pollock (1989) and Pascarella (1986) indicate that an ongoing research program to measure student interaction would be essential to the success of any retention program. Therefore, a strategy for ongoing research and tracking of students was included in the retention plan.

Models of retention plans were requested from Somerset Community College and Lees College because these were two year colleges in Kentucky, and they would have similar student populations. Somerset Community College did not have a formalized retention plan, and Lees College had not revised the retention plan since 1977. Therefore, these colleges' retention plans could not be used. Brevard College, in Brevard, North Carolina, and Young Harris College, in Young Harris, Georgia, both sent examples of retention plans. These institutions are both two year Methodist institutions similar to Sue Bennett College. Retention models in the literature, the Alabama Community College system and the Frapahoe Community College in Littleton, Colorado, were also examined for common elements in retention plans. Young Harris and Brevard were more oriented to retention of residential students than the Alabama model or the Frapahoe Community College model. However, the Brevard and Young Harris models did emphasize faculty interaction, campus-wide involvement, orientation

activities, and remedial instruction. The Alabama model and the Frapahoe Community College model both included early alert systems, data collection systems, and academic excellence programs. These elements were also recommended in the literature. Therefore, these elements were included in the college's retention plan with emphasis on faculty involvement. The Alabama Community College model was structured to include strategies for pre-enrollment, registration, financial aid, assessment, orientation, and instruction. As a result, Sue Bennett College's model included these strategy categories with an emphasis on financial aid for immediate priority.

The Student Life Committee at Sue Bennett College reviewed the draft document, and the committee suggested that the specific group or individuals responsible for the action be identified. Thus, the specific individual responsible for the implementation of the strategy was included with each strategy. The Deans of Students at St. Catherine's and at Lees College did not respond to the model of the retention plan that was sent to them for review. However, Vincent Tinto and Don Hossler did review the plan and responded. Both experts felt that the plan should be carried out over a period of years with priorities assigned. Tinto felt that the plan should address the issues of strategies for implementation, resources, timelines, and procedures for assessment. Therefore, timelines were assigned to the specific goals and included in the retention

plan. Also, concurrent to assigning the timelines, priorities for implementation were set within the plan. These priority goals also had strategies, timelines, and assessment procedures assigned. Resources were requested in the budget to support the strategies. The priority goals dealt with financial aid and faculty involvement first.

The Student Life Committee and the college administrators reviewed the retention plan during a college management staff meeting. The President and the Vice President for Financial Affairs examined the plan for costs and proposed that the costs of the plan be included in a three tier budget since the college is tuition-driven. The Student Life Committee submitted the plan to the Academic Affairs Committee of the college for review since the faculty would be involved with the retention strategies. The division chairpersons reviewed the plan with the six academic divisions. The faculty also reviewed the retention plan during the Faculty Forum. The faculty was concerned about the procedure for implementing the mentoring program. As a result, the Faculty Forum appointed a task force to work with the Student Life Committee to implement the mentoring program and to strengthen the existing advising program.

The retention plan was submitted to the President and subsequently to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees for review and approval. The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees will recommend

or not recommend the retention plan to the full Board of Trustees for approval. The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet during July 1992 to review the retention plan.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

From the beginning, the retention plan was intended to be practical and meaningful. There was a commitment to examining the best available ideas and the least cumbersome procedures in developing a retention plan and to presenting the retention plan in a form that would be understandable to the entire faculty and staff at Sue Bennett College. Realizing that a viable retention plan would be important to the vitality of the college, the advice of experts in retention was sought, and models of retention plans from other institutions were reviewed. The input from the faculty, the administration, and the staff at Sue Bennett College was essential to the success of the plan because the entire campus would be involved in the implementation of the plan. The models from other institutions also confirmed the elements that were defined in the literature as being common elements of retention plans.

As suggested in the literature, the retention plan would be assigned campus-wide responsibility (Simmons, 1986). Hossler (1985) and Simmons (1986) feel that an atmosphere for persistence should begin with the first inquiry. Thus, Sue Bennett College's retention plan included the development of an enrollment management plan that would help foster an environment for persistence. Hossler and Bean (1990) feel that a good retention plan should encompass marketing, recruitment, admissions, financial aid, and pricing. Pascarella (1986) and Hossler (1985) include academic advising, orientation, student services, and institutional research. Opp (1986) concludes that any successful retention plan should include testing, placement, and developmental courses for students. Beal and Noel (1987) believe that the most important factor is the caring attitude of the faculty and staff. Murdock (1991) and Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) feel that financial aid packaging and policies and early awarding of financial aid is essential in a retention plan. Koerin (1991) and Astin (1985) indicate that solid academic advising is also important to the institutional priorities in retention efforts. Therefore, Sue Bennett College's retention plan emphasized campus-wide participation, academic integration, faculty involvement, academic tutoring, academic advising, financial aid expediency, and freshmen orientation. Since faculty interaction and financial advising were viewed as essential in a retention plan for both traditional and

nontraditional students, these goals were assigned top priority in Sue Bennett College's retention plan.

For commuter and nontraditional students, Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1986) and Villella and Michael (1991) advocate reducing bureaucracy in admissions and registration procedures, increasing hours in the offices, increasing commuter parking, and offering more support services. Creative scheduling of courses and social activities is encouraged. These authors also advocate faculty mentoring, academic support, early alert systems, and child care. Thus, the committee included these elements in Sue Bennett College's retention plan.

Krotseng (1989), Pollock (1989), Tinto (1987), and Pascarell (1986) indicate that a system of ongoing research must be incorporated into any retention plan. Krotseng (1989) believes that the study should include the life cycle of the student from the first inquiry through graduation. Pollock (1989) suggests that the study include specific groups and include credit hours, grade point averages, withdrawals and the reasons, departures, and enrollments. As a result, Sue Bennett College's retention plan included a goal for ongoing research.

Sue Bennett College's retention plan included the major headings found in the Alabama Community College system plan, but it is still to be determined if the plan will meet all the needs of the students. Sue Bennett College's plan is based on a retention system that included strategies in pre-

enrollment, registration, financial aid, orientation, academics, instruction, and attendance. The plan also included elements that Simmons (1986) found were common tenets: (1) a caring attitude on the part of the faculty and the staff; (2) a recruitment effort that emphasized retention; (3) an institutional research effort that was ongoing; (4) a communications effort that included faculty, staff, and students; (5) an institutional support system that increased student competencies; (6) an evaluative system that assessed the effectiveness of the plan; (7) a campus-wide delegation of retention responsibilities.

Conclusions

It was concluded that to be effective, the retention plan had to have campus-wide participation and the support of the faculty and the staff. The retention plan had to have a life cycle that began with the first inquiry and ended with graduation. The retention plan also had to be supported by a systematic and comprehensive database of information that included an ongoing analysis of the students academically and socially. The plan also had to be evaluated to ascertain the effectiveness of the retention plan. The Sue Bennett College faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees supported the concept and the development of the retention plan. From the beginning, the faculty and the students were involved in designing the retention plan

via the Student Life Committee, and the committee recommended to the Board of Trustees that if adopted the plan should be reviewed annually. The administration was asked to support the retention plan in the budget request for the next academic year and a request for budgetary commitment over the next five years. The Student Life Committee and the faculty also supported the continuation of activities for retention that were already in place.

Implications

Retention is a much talked about issue, but any system that was developed had to have the cooperation of the faculty, the staff, the administration, and the Board of Trustees at Sue Bennett College to be successful. As a small campus with a caring faculty and staff, the college had a necessary characteristic for the success of the retention plan. The system was structured to include the faculty and staff in the plan rather than to regulate the activity to Student Services.

Another implication of the plan was that the incorporation of a strategy for an ongoing study of enrollment patterns at Sue Bennett College could definitely enhance the college's effectiveness. Having access to quantifiable feedback could improve communications, planning, and implementations of plans for retention. This type of longitudinal study will help Sue Bennett College

faculty and staff understand the retention problems at the college. By having access to data on some of the reasons for nonpersistence, strategies can be planned and implemented to increase retention.

Recommendations

Recommendations for developing a retention plan at Sue Bennett College include: (1) The retention plan should be adopted by the Board of Trustees. (2) The faculty and staff should receive a copy of the college's retention plan. (3) The retention plan should be implemented in priority stages by the faculty and staff. (4) The Board of Trustees should budget adequate funds to help ensure successful implementation of the plan. (5) The retention plan should be evaluated and revised on an annual basis. (6) Surveys should be conducted to evaluate the success of the plan.

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APPENDIX A

LETTERS FROM EXPERTS



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Cultural Foundations and Curriculum

May 16, 1992

.....

Sandra McLendon
VP for Academic Affairs
Sue Bennett College
151 College Street
London, Kentucky 40741

Dear Ms. McLendon:

I find it difficult, if not impossible, to fill out the evaluation sheet. Let me, instead, share with you a few reactions to your plan.

First, your plan proposes too much in too brief a time span. Though all the actions you note are useful, it is not practical or wise to expect to implement them all in a brief time period. The thorny issue that you must decide is what critical actions you must address first and what can be delayed until those first actions are completed. To restate a point I made in Nashville, a successful program typically takes five to ten years to fully implement. The secret of their success is in knowing what battles to fight first and how to grow over time. In my view, your plan, if followed to the letter, will lead you to be less successful than you might because it calls for you to diffuse your energies and resources over too many goals and actions.

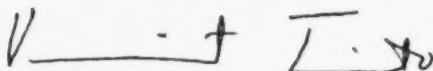
Second, you need to plan for an implementation process that allows time for the inevitable pilot stage of program development. Though some actions can be taken immediately, other actions that involve new programs typically take several years to fully implement. Remember start small, assess for program improvement, and grow over time.

Third and finally, your plan does not speak to the critical issue of implementation strategies, resources, timelines, and assessment procedures. What you describe in your plan is a series of goals, actions, and responsible people. You do not address how those actions will be implemented, how they will be assessed, or how resources will be allocated to see that those tasks are completed.

As an exercise, you might try the following. Take one action (tactic) such as 'Night and Saturday College' and work out a full plan for the implementation of that single action. List in a timeline management plan how you would get from the present to a fully implemented Night and Saturday College. If you do so, I believe you will find that attending to that one task will itself be a significant undertaking.

I hope these comments are useful. Please feel free to call or write again if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'V. Tinto', with a horizontal line extending from the 'V' and a stylized flourish at the end.

Vincent Tinto



Sue Bennett College



Office of the Academic Dean

Phone 606•864•2547

Fax 606•864•8475

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUE BENNETT COLLEGE RETENTION PLAN

1. Is the retention plan clear and understandable?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, how can it be improve?

2. Does the plan involve the entire campus?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, who else should be include?

3. Is the plan comprehensive enough?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, what other elements should be included?

4. Should any elements be excluded from the plan?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, what elements should be excluded?

This plan is comprehensive, however I have some concerns. Some of the goals will not be easily reached, but the plan doesn't provide much detail. How well you accomplish them? What about costs? Also the plan is some comprehensive can you accomplish them all in one year?

5. Comments:

This plan is comprehensive, however I have some concerns. Some of the goals will not be easily reached, but the plan doesn't provide much detail. How well you accomplish them? What about costs? Also the plan is some comprehensive can you accomplish them all in one year?

Don [Signature]

151 College Street • London, Kentucky 40741

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APPENDIX B
SUE BENNETT COLLEGE'S RETENTION PLAN

PHILOSOPHY OF THE RETENTION PLAN

Sue Bennett College retention plan is a campus-wide plan. In this plan, the mission of the college to provide a liberal arts education to the people of southeastern Kentucky was the guiding principle for the plan. The plan begins with the first inquiry and culminates with the desired objective of the graduation of the student. However, since not every student has graduation as a goal, every student who leaves the college having attained clearly stated goals will be considered a success in the retention program at Sue Bennett College. A major priority will be placed on removing obstacles to students' succeeding in attaining these goals.

GOALS FOR RETENTION AT SUE BENNETT COLLEGE
--

The goals of Sue Bennett College's retention plan are to:

- * Increase student satisfaction and success at Sue Bennett College.
- * Motivate students to remain at the college and complete their educational goals.
- * Decrease the number of withdrawals.
- * Encourage campus-wide participation in the plan.
- * Improve tracking of students and access to information for better planning for retention strategies.
- * Improve student services and academic support programs for greater retention.
- * Enhance the college's image for greater student satisfaction.
- * Improve campus communication.
- * Increase the faculty's awareness of retention strategies.

RETENTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION AT SUE BENNETT COLLEGE

Sue Bennett Colleges retention plan is based on strategies discussed in the literature and programs already in existence in other colleges. The plan is divided into major categories that include pre-enrollment, registration, financial aid, orientation, academics and instruction, attendance, and tracking of students. The categories include goals, implementation strategies, timelines, and the individuals or groups responsible for implementing the action plans. Resources for the implementation of the plan are requested through budget allocations for the next five years. After the strategies are implemented, another category will be added that provides for the results of the evaluation of the plan.

Strategies for Retention

<u>Goals/ Categories</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Responsible Individual(s)</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Create image of concern for student needs and interests (1996-1997)	Campus tours	Admissions	Admissions Committee
	Follow-up letter	Admissions	Admission Committee
	Follow-up phone calls	Admissions	Admission Committee
	College folders	Admissions	Student Life
	Newsletter	Admissions	Student Life
	Articulation\ other colleges	Academic Dean	Academic Affairs
	Creative scheduling	Dean\Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Night\Saturday College	Dean\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Placement	Dean\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Build positive relations	Whole campus	President
	Network business, Administration financial aid, admissions, registrar (ONGOING)		President
	Student access to campus(signs, maps, parking)	Administration	President

Improve student's convenience on campus (1997-1998)	Longer hours	Whole campus	President
	Accept credit cards	Business Office	Student Life
	Open a day care	Student Services	Student Life
	Parallel college and public school calendars	Academic Dean	Academic Affairs
	Provide creative schedule	Dean\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Restrict class size	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Improve campus parking	Physical Plant	Student Life
Create an atmosphere for ease of student registration (1994-1995)	Provide commuter parking	Dean of Students	Student Life
	Publish schedules early	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Curtail late registrations	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Appoint advisors early	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Provide mail/ telephone registration	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Provide times to register early	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Monitor statistics for registration	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Create student centered withdrawal	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Monitor withdrawal statistics (ONGOING)	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Develop survey to determine why students withdraw from courses	Academic Affairs	Academic Affairs

	Analyze courses\ high withdrawal to provide support system	Academic Affairs	Academic Affairs
	Create student-centered academic reports	Registrar\ Academic Dean	Academic Affairs
	Acknowledge academic excellence	Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Allow flexible payment plan	Business Office	Business Manager
	Review registration procedures	Registrar\ Academic Dean	Academic Affairs
	Provide night and extended campus registration	Registrar	Academic Affairs
Facilitate ways for students to obtain financial aid (1992-1994)	Conduct financial aid workshops	Financial Aid	Student Life
	Conduct money management	Student Services	Student Life
	Provide staff development	Academic Dean	Academic Affairs
	Offer new financial aid(Academic, Athletic, Workstudy, Need)	Board of Trustees	President
	Award aid early	Financial Aid	Student Life
	Computerize the financial aid awarding	President	Student Life
	Evaluate awards	Financial Aid	Financial Aid Committee

Expand the orientation program for new students (1994-1995)	Expand orientation to a credit course	Dean Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Use students as peer advisors	Dean of Students	Student Life
	Provide career and transfer counseling	Student Services	Student Life
	Provide workshops (Transfer, survival skills, values)	Student Services	Student Life
	Have workshops for transfer and non-traditional students	Student Services	Student Life
	Develop weekly student newsletter	Student Services	Student Life
	Provide summer orientation	Student Services	Student Life
	Provide student/peer tutoring center	Student Services	Student Life
	Review campus early alert system	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Communicate support services to students	Faculty\ Student Services	Student Life
	Provide full time counselor	President	Student Life
	Provide faculty workshop	Counselor	Student Life
	Publish a manual for counseling guidelines	Counselor	Student Life
	Promote a student-centered faculty for retention (1992-1994)	Provide faculty work shops for retention	Faculty Develop Committee
	Develop a mentoring system for faculty and students	Deans\ Faculty	Student Life\ Academic Affairs

Utilize pre-tests for confirmation of student placement in developmental courses	Faculty	Academic Affairs
Review faculty advising system	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
Publish advisors manual for faculty	Academic Dean\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
Develop advising workshop for faculty	Faculty Develop Committee	Academic Affairs
Expand Learning Lab hours	Academic Dean	Academic Affairs
Provide tutoring in each academic division	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
Create a central advising center	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
Provide university parallel for transfer students	Academic Dean\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
Evaluate student scheduling needs	Faculty\ Deans\ Students	Student Life
Develop communication for early alert	Deans\ Faculty\ Students	Academic Affairs Student Life
Provide opportunities for students and faculty to interact informally	Deans\ Faculty\ Students	Student Life
Assign faculty to sponsor clubs	Deans	Student Life
Provide access to faculty through office hours (also night and weekend college)	Faculty	Academic Affairs
Provide Honor's Day to award academic	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs

excellence

	Provide syllabi for courses with grading policy, tests, goals and objectives, and assignments	Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Get feedback from students	Deans\ Facutly\ Students	Academic Affairs Student Life
	Provide positive reinforcement if possible	Whole campus	Student Life
	Obtain student information file for each course	Faculty\ Registrar	Academic Affairs
	Discuss different teaching techniques and try them	Academic Division	Academic Affairs
	Try alternative teaching approaches	Faculty	Academic Dean
	Identify the passive student who is not performing and help	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Conduct mini-tours of Learning Center, Counseling, Student Placement, etc.	Faculty	Student Life
	Place old tests in Library	Faculty/ Librarian	Student Life
	Review formal semester student evaluations	Faculty/ Dean/ Division Chairs	Academic Affairs
Create an atmosphere for persistence in attendance (1992-1993)	Adopt a campus-wide attendance policy	Deans\ Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Establish a buddy systems for students to get assignments when they miss class	Faculty	Academic Affairs

	State attendance policy in syllabi	Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Provide creative schedules for working and commuter students	Registrar Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Call students who are frequently absent	Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Identify students for early alert system	Faculty	Student Life
	Allow student to go another class to make-up an absence	Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Provide make-up when instructor misses a class	Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Review attendance at first class session	Faculty	Academic Affairs
	Work with counselor on follow-up to absences	Faculty/ Counselor	Student Life
	Talk to colleagues who have same students for patterns	Faculty	Academic Dean
Create methods to track students and methods to retain students (1994-1995)	Increase campus-wide awareness of retention, attrition, and dropouts	Registrar	Deans
	Provide workshops for entire campus on retention	Deans	Student Life
	Develop a research database for a longitudinal study for student persistence	Registrar	Student Life
	Develop a college-wide policy for exit interview and procedures	Board of Trustees	Student Life
	Review policies and practices to promote student retention	President Board of Trustees	

APPENDIX C

SUE BENNETT COLLEGE'S FINANCIAL AID PLAN

SUE BENNETT COLLEGE
REVISED COLLEGE-AWARDED FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Beginning with the Fall semester of 1992-93, full-time (12 semester hours or more per semester) students will be eligible for the following financial aid programs. A student can qualify for no more than one of the awards mentioned below for any single semester. The student who meets the qualifications for more than one will receive the award with the highest dollar value.

IF THE NEW STUDENT.....

...he/she qualifies for...

...<u>Presidential Scholarship</u> - Ranked 1st or 2nd in high school class/or 1st or 2nd in class with College Prep Curriculum. Supply letter from high school counselor certifying rank based on 7th or 8th semester. Must be used within 12 months of graduation from high school.	\$13,000
...<u>Dean's Scholarship</u> - graduates in the top 10 percent of his/her high school class or an 25 ACT or 1050 SAT/or National Merit Scholar. Supply letter from high school counselor certifying rank based on 7th or 8th semester	\$1,200
...<u>Honor's Scholarship</u> - Top 25% of high school class	\$1,000
...<u>Trustee's Scholarship</u> - Eight county graduate in top 50% of class	\$ 800
...Dependent child of Graduate of Sue Bennett College	\$ 700
...Member of United Methodist Church	\$ 700
...Any graduate in top 50% of high school class, regardless of location	\$ 600

IF A CONTINUING STUDENT (30 SEMESTER)
HOURS OR MORE COMPLETED)....

...he/she qualifies for...

... <u>Presidential Scholarship</u> - Previous Presidential Scholar and a .00 grade point average	\$3.000
... <u>Dean's Scholarship</u> - Previous Dean's Scholar and a 2.50 grade point average	\$1.200
... <u>Honor's Scholarship</u> - Previous Honor's Scholar and a 2.50 grade point average	\$1.000
...has a 3.85 or better grade point average	\$1.000
...has a 3.40 to 3.84 grade point average	\$ 800
... <u>Trustee's Scholarship</u> - Previous Trustee's Scholar and a 2.25 to 2.99 grade point average	\$ 800
...Dependent child of Graduate of Sue Bennett College	\$ 700
...Member of United Methodist Church	\$ 700
...Any graduate in top 50% of high school class, regardless of location and a 2.50 grade point average	\$ 600

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DEFINITIONS

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The eight counties are Laurel, Rockcastle, Knox, Clay, Pulaski, Jackson, McCreary, and Whitley.

Membership in the United Methodist Church must be verified in writing by a local pastor or membership secretary.

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges
AUG 21 1992